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EDITORIAL

The fact that interest in the question of examinations is perennial indicates that it is important. Without doubt it is, for the kind of teaching actually to be found in the classroom, no matter what may be the popular educational doctrine of the moment, is largely determined by the tests which the teachers—or their pupils—have to meet. Examinations, indeed, share with textbooks and tradition the responsibility of determining both the pabulum of the schools and the methods of feeding. It follows, therefore, that those who control our examinations may care little who writes our pedagogy. In fact, it is probable that they do.

Just now attention is freshly centered upon the action of the College Entrance Examination Board. That organization has lately been intrusted with the responsibility of testing all candidates for the three great examining colleges in the East—Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. As a consequence, every secondary school in which are found students who hope to enter any of these colleges, as well as any of the others served by the Board, feels more or less compelled to shape its program so as to meet the requirements which the Board's examinations automatically impose. This is true, not because the Board wishes to "dominate" the secondary schools, but because examinations do in themselves constitute standards of attainment that must be met.

Until recently little was known as to the methods employed by the various examining committees of the Board in carrying on their work. The English Committee has evidently thought this unfortunate, and through the head reader in composition, Professor Steeves, has presented in pamphlet form a brief account of how papers in that subject are handled. This has called forth considerable adverse criticism, to which Professor Steeves' article in this issue of the *Journal* is in part an answer. The editors of the *Journal* are happy to serve the country by providing a forum for

thoughtful, searching, and dignified discussion of the subject. Mr. Ward, of the Taft School, has prepared a trenchant article, leaving no one in the slightest doubt as to the attitude of the private-school teacher toward the work of the English Committee of the Board. Other articles will follow.

Meanwhile the National Council of Teachers of English has created a large and representative committee on examinations, which will consider the problem from all sides. Examinations in formal aspects of English are one thing; those in power to organize ideas, quite another; while examinations in literature, some say, are not possible at all. Certainly an external examination as a test of fitness to enter a higher institution—if it can be a test of fitness—is not to be confused with those tests which the teacher in the classroom administers from time to time for the sake of enabling his pupils to judge their own progress and as a legitimate stimulus to renewed effort. Nor is either of these to be confused with a scientific or objective scale or standard, arrived at by statistical methods, and freed from personal bias and fluctuation due to circumstances. The subject of tests in English is one that permits of much careful investigation. The new committee of the Council will undoubtedly persist until it has collected a significant body of facts and principles with regard to the matter. Those having contributions to make are invited to communicate with the chairman of the committee, Mr. C. C. Certain, Cass Technical High School, Detroit, Michigan, or with the Secretary of the National Council of Teachers of English.

At the last meeting of the National Council in New York, a brief and simple, but tremendously important, resolution was unanimously adopted. In substance it provided

The that there should be an oral English requirement for
Movement for graduation from high school and entrance to college.
Oral English

The resolution was introduced by the Committee on American Speech to test the opinion of the members present on the value of oral English as a high-school subject, and on the feasibility of giving it a place in the high-school curriculum along with written composition and literature. A sharp discussion was expected, if

not on the merits of the subject *per se*, at least on the desirability of requiring a reasonable skill in it from candidates for graduation from high school and entrance to college. It was also expected that there would be vigorous objection to the resolution on the ground that no adequate test of a candidate's skill in using oral English can be devised and administered.

That no word of objection to any part of the resolution was offered in the general meeting where it was presented, or subsequently, seems to indicate that English teachers at least agree as to the importance of oral English, and that they take for granted that it should be—and will be—regarded as a large and necessary part of the high-school course in English.

It is therefore not unreasonable to infer that in high schools oral English should be taught (1) in the regular English course of instruction, (2) in regular English classes, (3) by regular English teachers, and (4) that it should be taken into account when pupils are being tested in English for fitness for graduation from high school and entrance to college.

Further, since all are agreed as to the value of oral English, it may rationally be inferred that it is the present business of those who formulate courses of instruction for high schools and entrance requirements for colleges to determine what standards of oral English may reasonably be set for high-school pupils, and how their attainments may be measured.

Such a standard and test will not be difficult to determine if those in the high schools and the colleges who are responsible for the English studied will make the effort necessary to get together. Several states have already undertaken to introduce oral English into their high-school English courses. It seems that, at last, oral English is beginning to receive the recognition and the place that it deserves in the secondary schools.